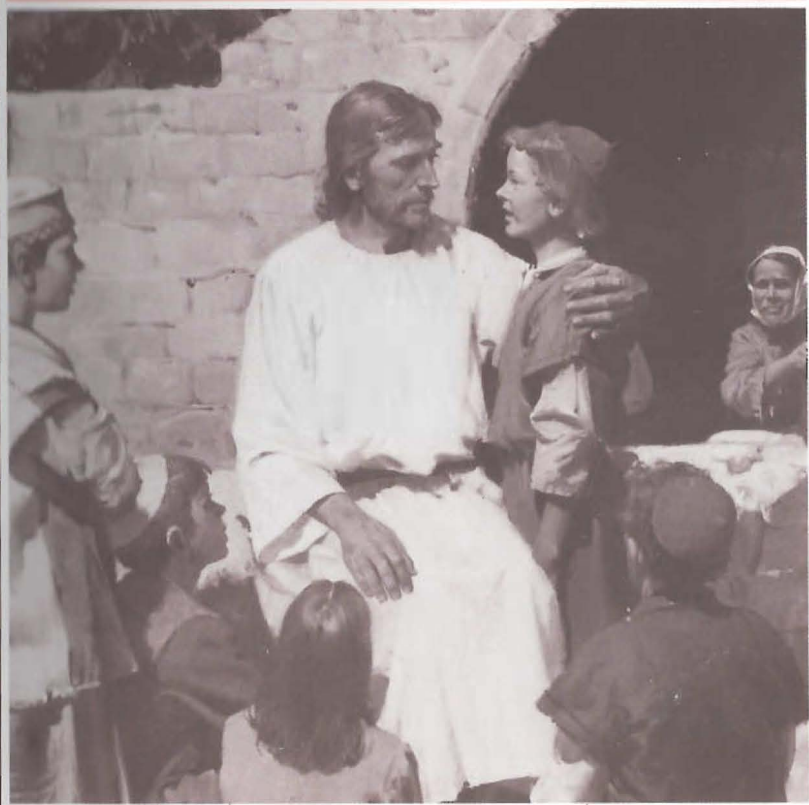


LIVING A CHRISTLIKE LIFE

DISCUSSION 5

UNIFORM SYSTEM FOR TEACHING THE GOSPEL





LIVING A CHRISTLIKE LIFE

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UNIFORM SYSTEM FOR TEACHING THE GOSPEL

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS DISCUSSION

Planning for the Discussion

Prepare to teach this discussion by reviewing what took place during your previous visits with the investigators. Plan how you can build upon positive experiences, and anticipate questions and concerns. Specifically, plan (a) what you will do to prepare these investigators to feel the Spirit, (b) when to invite them to make commitments, and (c) how you will follow up to help them keep their commitments.

If the investigators have not yet committed themselves to be baptized or have not yet attended Church meetings, these commitments must be among your major objectives for this discussion. Identify anything that might be holding the investigators back. Make plans for helping them overcome any obstacles.

Review the main principles of this discussion. Then plan how you might present the discussion to build upon experiences you have had with the investigators and meet their needs and interests.

Doctrinal Overview

By obeying the two great commandments—love for God and love for others—we can overcome the natural tendency to be selfish. We can become more like our Father in Heaven. By living the law of tithing and the law of the fast, we show that we are willing to put the things of God first in our lives. The main principles in this discussion are—

1. We should love God and our fellowmen.
2. Sacrifice brings blessings.
3. Fasting and fast offerings bring us spiritual blessings.
4. The law of tithing helps us develop selflessness.

Commitments

During this discussion you need to help the investigators feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. This will prepare them to make the commitments that lead to conversion and baptism. During this discussion the investigators should commit themselves to—

- Pay tithing.

In addition, you should reinforce their commitment to be baptized. Invite them to commit themselves to take part in the sixth discussion, to attend Church meetings, to read further in the Book of Mormon, and to continue to pray about what they are learning.

CREATE A LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

DISCUSSION

Establish a Reverent Atmosphere and Continue to Build Relationships of Trust

Review

TEACHING HELPS

Set a reverent and relaxed teaching atmosphere. Strengthen the relationship of trust between you and the investigators.

Invite the family head to ask someone to pray. If the investigators have not yet prayed themselves, encourage the family head to offer the prayer. As appropriate, use the "Instruction on Prayer" in the instruction booklet.

Review the following things with the investigators. Use the study guide for the fourth discussion in reviewing the Book of Mormon readings, the previous discussion, and the commitments.

Book of Mormon. Review what the investigators have read in the Book of Mormon. Answer any questions they have about what they have read. Find out—

- Which passages impressed them the most.
- What questions they have.
- How they feel about what they have read.

Previous Discussion. Review briefly the principles discussed in the fourth discussion. Discuss with the investigators any questions they have, and help them resolve any concerns.

Previous Commitments and Spiritual Experiences. As directed by the Spirit, review with the investigators their progress in keeping their commitments. Review their preparation to be baptized on (date). Discuss any moments when they have felt the influence of the Spirit since they began learning about the Church. Find out—

- How the investigators have felt as they have lived according to the Word of Wisdom.
- What interested them most as they attended Church meetings on Sunday.
- How they feel about the Church and their associations with Church members.
- How they have felt as they have read in the Book of Mormon and the study guides.
- How they have felt as they have prayed about the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, and the other things you have taught them.

DISCUSSION

Introduce This Discussion

TEACHING HELPS

- Whether they feel they have received an answer to their prayers. How has the answer come?
- How they have felt as they have thought and prayed about being baptized.

Explain that during this visit you will be discussing some of the ways we progress toward living more Christlike lives. To achieve that goal, we need to put the things of God first in our lives and overcome those attitudes that lead us to put ourselves first. You will be discussing some of the commandments that the Lord has given to help us develop greater selflessness.

PRINCIPLE 1 THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

DISCUSSION

We Tend to Seek Our Self-interest

During our life on earth, we have a strong tendency to seek our own self-interest. We tend to seek worldly goods and the praise of others. Selfishness is a great danger to us spiritually. When we become self-centered, we may forget God and become insensitive to other people. In this state we could not fulfill the plan of our Father and become more like him.

God Gave Two Great Commandments

To help us develop unselfish desires, the Lord has given us commandments. When Jesus was asked which commandment was the most important, he replied: [Read and discuss Matthew 22:37-39.]

We Show Our Love for God by Keeping His Commandments

Jesus taught us how to show our love for God. [Read and discuss John 14:15.] When we love God, we desire to do what he wants us to do. We need to be humble like little children and seek to know his will in all things. We must then have the courage to obey him, even if we must give up some things we want very much.

We Show Our Love for Others through Service

If we love God, we should also love our fellowmen. The Book of Mormon

TEACHING HELPS

Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand why we must overcome our self-centeredness and place our highest values on spiritual things.

TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

Love God

Love your neighbor

DISCUSSION

explains the relationship between these two great commandments. [Read and discuss Mosiah 2:17.] As we serve others, we overcome selfishness and become more like our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

TEACHING HELPS

Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand how the two great commandments help us become more like our Heavenly Father and fulfill his plan.
- Whether they feel it is important to place a higher value on the will of God than on our own worldly desires.
- When they have felt the joy of serving others.

Testify: Express your feelings about—

- Your love for your Heavenly Father.
- The joy that comes from serving others (for example, as a missionary).

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

2 Nephi 10:23-24 ("Reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh.")

Mosiah 4:11-26 (To retain a remission of your sins, succor the poor and needy, both spiritually and temporally.)

3 Nephi 6:15-17 (Satan led the people to commit iniquity, puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for the vain things of the world.)

3 Nephi 27:27 ("What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.")

Moroni 7; 1 Corinthians 13 (Charity, a pure love, excels all else.)

Matthew 25:40 ("Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.")

John 13:15 ("I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.")

EXAMPLES

To show how the gospel helps us develop selflessness:

Explain your reasons for serving for two years at your own or your family's expense to share the gospel with others. Discuss how the gospel of Jesus Christ develops this kind of unselfishness in thousands of missionaries. They make great sacrifices to perform this work for the Lord.

Tell about a time when you saw members of the Church rally to help their neighbors in need (during a serious illness, a death, a flood, an earthquake, or some other serious problem).

Explain that because the Church has no paid ministry, the Church provides opportunities for many to serve selflessly. The members willingly give voluntary service.

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

EXAMPLES

John 13:34-35 ("By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.")

1 Timothy 1:5 ("The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.")

1 John 4:20-21 ("And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.")

D&C 121:45 ("Let thy bowels also be full of charity; . . . let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.")

Topical Guide: Charity; God, Love of; God, Will of; Selfishness; Will

PRINCIPLE 2 SACRIFICE BRINGS BLESSINGS

DISCUSSION

We Must Sacrifice Our Own Interests

To love and serve God and our fellowman, we often must sacrifice our own interests. This means that we place the needs of others above our own. Sacrifice can be very hard.

We Must Put the Things of God First

The Lord has always tested people. He wants to see whether they will put the things of God first in their lives. [*Read and discuss 3 Nephi 13:33.*] We need to be willing to give our time, our possessions, our talents, and our energies to the work of the Lord.

We Should Give What Is Required

We may not be asked to sacrifice everything. But we should learn to sacrifice willingly whatever is required. Doing so helps us become worthy to live in the presence of God.

Sacrifice Requires Faith

To sacrifice, we must have great faith in the Lord. We must also trust that we will receive the promised rewards.

Sacrifice Brings Blessings

Through sacrifice we can know the joy of sharing and giving. We can feel the influence of the Holy Spirit growing stronger in our lives.

TEACHING HELPS

Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand why the Lord requires his people to make sacrifices.
- How they have felt when they have willingly sacrificed something for someone else.

DISCUSSION

TEACHING HELPS

Testify: Express your feelings about—

- The blessings you have received when others have sacrificed for you (especially the Savior).

Invite: When the investigators feel the influence of the Spirit, help them commit themselves to show their faith in God and love for other people. They can do this by sharing their time, talents, and possessions with family members and with the Lord's Church.

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 11:17 (Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac.)

Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15-34 ("Seek ye first the kingdom of God.")

Matthew 19:29 (Everyone who sacrifices for the Lord's sake shall inherit everlasting life.)

Luke 9:57-62 ("No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.")

D&C 97:8 (Those who "observe their covenants by sacrifice" are accepted of the Lord.)

D&C 98:13-15 (The Lord "will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in [his] covenant, even unto death.")

Topical Guide: Sacrifice

EXAMPLES

To show the importance of sacrifice:

Jesus once asked a rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. He promised that the young man would have treasures in heaven. The young ruler did not want to make this great sacrifice. He gave up the opportunity to have eternal blessings (see Luke 18:18-23). By contrast, when the Lord asked Peter and Andrew to follow him, they immediately forsook everything and followed him (see Luke 5:1-11 and John 1:35-42).

To show how we demonstrate our love for the Lord:

Relate the parable of the two sons whom the father sent to work in his vineyard (see Matthew 21:28-32).

To show the blessings that come from sacrifice:

Tell about a time when you or someone you know enjoyed great blessings because of sacrifice.

PRINCIPLE 3 FASTING AND FAST OFFERINGS

DISCUSSION

Fasting Helps Us Put God First

The law of the fast gives us another way to put the things of God above our own desires. To fast means to go without food and drink for a period of time. Fasting has always been a form of true worship.

We Receive Blessings from Fasting

Obedying the law of the fast can bring great blessings into our lives and help us serve others. This law increases our humility and brings us closer to God. It also teaches us to control our physical bodies. Our faith and spirituality grow stronger.

Fasting Should Include Prayer

When we fast, we should also pray sincerely. We could pray for guidance or for special blessings for ourselves and others. Fasting can be a powerful way of gaining a testimony.

One Sunday Each Month Is Set Aside as a Fast Day

The Church sets aside one Sunday each month as a special day to fast. During this day the members fast for two meals and gather for a testimony meeting. These days will provide great spiritual experiences for you.

Through Fasting We Can Help Those in Need

Fasting also enables us to help those who are in need. We give the money we

TEACHING HELPS

Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand what fasting means.

DISCUSSION

save by fasting to the bishop to care for the needy. In this way we can help to care for the sick, the hungry, and those who have other problems.

Our Fast Offerings Should Be Generous

This money is called a fast offering. It need not be limited to the amount saved by fasting for two meals. The prophets have encouraged us to be generous in our offerings.

Fasting Helps Us Be Selfless

The law of the fast helps us become selfless. It enables us to share in the work of the Lord and helps us become more like him.

Sacrifice Shows Love for God

By giving our time and possessions for the benefit of others, we show our love for God and his Son. We do our part in the plan of our Father. We prepare ourselves to have joy in this life and eternal life hereafter. Most important, we show our commitment to serve the Lord. This commitment is a requirement for baptism.

TEACHING HELPS

Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand the purposes and blessings of fasting and the fast offering.
- Whether they feel that fasting and paying fast offerings would bring blessings into their lives.
- Whether they will fast as well as pray about the truthfulness of the Church (if necessary).
- Whether they will obey the law of the fast when they join the Church.

Testify: Express your feelings about—

- The spiritual strength that comes from fasting and contributing to those in need.
- The blessings you have enjoyed as you have fasted and paid fast offerings.

Invite: As prompted by the Spirit, you may want to invite the investigators to fast as they pray about your message.

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Mosiah 4:16-27 (Administer to the poor and needy both temporally and spiritually.)

Alma 5:46 (Alma fasted and prayed to know the truth.)

Alma 6:6 (The Church fasted and prayed for "the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God.")

Ezra 8:23 ("We fasted and besought our God for this.")

Isaiah 58:3-12 (Isaiah explains the law of the fast and the blessings of fasting.)

Matthew 6:1-4; 6:16-18 (We should not draw attention to our fasting and our offerings.)

2 Corinthians 9:7 (Do not give grudgingly, "for God loveth a cheerful giver.")

James 1:27 ("Pure religion . . . is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.")

D&C 59:12-16 (Blessings come from fasting and prayer.)

Topical Guide: Fast, Fasting; Welfare

EXAMPLES

You might use—

- The parable of the rich man who built greater barns (see Luke 12:15-21).
- The parable of the good Samaritan (see Luke 10:29-37).
- The parable of Lazarus and the rich man (see Luke 16:19-25).

PRINCIPLE 4 TITHING

DISCUSSION

Tithing Helps Us Put God First

Another way we learn to put the things of God first in our lives is by obeying the law of tithing. The law of tithing is not new. It was taught by Old Testament prophets, including Malachi. [Read and discuss Malachi 3:8-11.]

God Is the Source of All We Have

To understand this law, we should remember that God is the source of everything we have. In the law of tithing, he commands us to return to him one-tenth of our income. This money is used for his work. The word *tithe* means "tenth."

We Participate in the Work of the Lord

Tithing is the way God supplies the needs of his Church. Through the law of tithing, each of us can support the work of the Lord and his Church.

Tithing Develops Unselfishness

Paying tithing also helps us develop unselfishness. Tithing is a test of our faith. As we obey this commandment, the Lord promises to bless us both spiritually and temporally.

TEACHING HELPS



Find Out—

- Whether the investigators understand what tithing is.
- Whether they recognize that great blessings come from obeying this law.
- How they feel about paying tithing after they are baptized.

Testify: Express your feelings about—

- Your own experience in paying tithing.
- Your faith that God blesses those who trust him enough to pay tithing.

DISCUSSION

Commitment Invitation: Tithing

Will you live the law of tithing when you are baptized by contributing one-tenth of your income to the Church?

TEACHING HELPS

Additional Preparation

If additional preparation is necessary, you might—

- Make sure the investigators know how tithing is used. Make sure they understand the blessings that come from paying tithing.
- Read and discuss scriptural examples of selflessness in giving of possessions (for example, Luke 21:1-4 or 1 Kings 17:8-16).
- Share an experience you have had with tithing.
- Testify about the blessings that come from paying tithing.

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Jacob 2:18-19 ("Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.")

3 Nephi 13:19-21; Matthew 6:19-21 ("Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.")

3 Nephi 13:24; Matthew 6:24 ("Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.")

3 Nephi 13:33; Matthew 6:33 ("But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.")

Hebrews 7:1-2 (Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek.)

D&C 64:23 ("It is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of [the Lord's] people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.")

D&C 85:3 ("He may tithe his people, to prepare them against the day of vengeance and burning.")

D&C 119:3-4 (Tithing is a "standing law . . . forever.")

Topical Guide: Tithing

EXAMPLES

To put tithing in proper perspective:

Suppose I told you that I would give you one hundred dollars if you would give ten dollars back to me. Would you do it? Our Father in Heaven has given us all we have. He asks only that we return 10 percent of it to him. This money is used to build meetinghouses and temples and do other worthwhile things. When we pay tithing, he promises he will give us even more of the good things of the earth. But most important, he promises that he will open the windows of heaven and pour out great spiritual and temporal blessings.

CONCLUSION

DISCUSSION

Additional Commitments

TEACHING HELPS

Baptism

Strengthen the investigators' commitment to be baptized on (date). Confirm their scheduled baptism date (or invite them to be baptized if you have not already done so). Discuss any further preparation that is needed and how you can help.

Taking Part in the Next Discussion

Make sure you obtain a firm commitment for the investigators to take part in the sixth discussion (usually within the next two to three days).

Word of Wisdom

Strengthen the investigators' commitment to continue living the Word of Wisdom. Discuss their progress in keeping their commitment and any ways you can help.

Chastity

If necessary, strengthen the investigators' commitment to live the law of chastity.

Reading and Praying

Help the investigators commit themselves to continue reading in the Book of Mormon and praying to know the truth of what they are learning.

Attending Church Meetings

Confirm the investigators' plans to attend Church meetings. Invite them to attend if they have not already attended. Discuss how you can help them.

Study Guide

Use the study guide for this discussion to review the principles you have discussed and the commitments the investigators have made. Mark any scriptures to which you want to draw special attention. Fill out the information on the back of the study guide, including the date of your next appointment. Explain that you will be glad to answer any questions during your next visit.

DISCUSSION

Close with Prayer

TEACHING HELPS

By now the investigators should be willing to offer the prayer. Suggest that the family head ask one of them to pray. If necessary, use the "Instruction on Prayer" in the instruction booklet to reinforce the basic pattern of prayer.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

